

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 03072 271333Z
ACTION NEA-11

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R 271100Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8194

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 3072

STADIS//////////

FOR NEA/ARN HOWELL

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN JEWRY

1. TOUTAH TOLD CHARGE MAY 26 THAT SYRIAN AUTHORITIES WERE BEGINNING TO LOOSEN UP ON TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS BUT ISSUANCE OF PASSPORTS HAD NOT BEGUN TO REACH LEVEL OF LAST SPRING. KATASH AND JUJATI (BUSINESSMEN) WERE BOTH TAKING THEIR WIVES TO EUROPE THIS SUMMER AND ALBERT NOSSEIRI WAS TAKING HIS MOTHER (NOSSEIRI'S BROTHER IN ISRAEL WILL MEET THEM IN EUROPE). IN ALL CASES BOND HAD BEEN SET AT 25,000 SYRIAN POUNDS AND EACH HAD REQUIRED TOUTAH'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION. WHEN I ASKED ABOUT MEDICAL TRAVEL APPLICATIONS, TOUTAH SAID THERE WERE SEVERAL PENDING BUT THE JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE WAS HAVING TROUBLE ARRANGING THE NECESSARY APPOINTMENTS AND FACILITIES IN SWITZERLAND.

2. TOUTAH SAID HE FEARED A RECENT CASE MIGHT CAUSE PROBLEMS. ABOUT FIVE MONTHS AGO A DAMASCUS JEWISH BUSINESSMAN HAD OBTAINED PERMISSION TO TAKE HIS WIFE ABROAD FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT. THEIR PASSPORTS HAD EXPIRED AND THEY HAD NEITHER RETURNED NOR APPLIED FOR EXTENSIONS. NOW THEIR THREE CHILDREN HAD ALL SUCCESSFULLY FLED THE
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 03072 271333Z

COUNTRY ILLEGALLY. TOUTAH SAID HE WAS ENGAGED IN A DESPERATE EFFORT TO GET THE SHOP TRANSFERRED TO THE NAME OF A BROTHER BEFORE THE AUTHORITIES SEIZED IT.

3. TOUTAH SAID THAT LAST MONTH THE ABBOUD FAMILY FROM LEBANON HAD VISITED RELATIVES IN SYRIA AND ON THE WAY BACK TO LEBANON, MR. ABBOUD HAD BEEN ARRESTED BY

SYRIAN AUTHORITIES. IT TURNED OUT THE SYRIANS KNEW THROUGH INTELLIGENCE CONTACTS IN AIRLINE OFFICES IN CYPRUS THAT ABOUD HAD VISITED ISRAEL SEVERAL TIMES USING THE BEIRUT-CYPRUS-LOD ROUTE. HE HAD NOW BEEN HELD FOR TWENTY DAYS, ALTHOUGH THE REST OF THE FAMILY HAD BEEN QUICKLY RELEASED TO TOUTAH'S CUSTODY.

4. TOUTAH SAID THAT 30 MORE SYRIAN JEWS HAD ESCAPED FROM QAMISHLE TO TURKEY OVER THE PAST MONTH. HE FORESAW THE ILLEGAL DEPARTURE OF THE ENTIRE REMAINDER OF THE QAMISHLE COMMUNITY IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE DESCRIBED THE ALEPPO AND DAMASCUS COMMUNITIES AS MUCH MORE STABLE AND PROSPEROUS. EVERYONE WAS WORKING, HE SAID, AND THE GRADUATION CLASSES OF THE TWO JEWISH SCHOOLS IN DAMASCUS HAD DONE EXCEPTIONALLY WELL IN THEIR EXAMS THIS SPRING.
PELLETREAU

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